"When labor pains begin, or are momentarily expected, the woman goes to the birth house (im lipelū) on Falalap near the channel. This building is strictly tabw to men. If a man were to enter it, all the food would rot, and all the people suffer famine. Spiro did not succeed in having an exception to this taboo made in his case; even the psychopathic Tarobweliman did not venture into the birth house, so far as known.

While a woman is in the birth house, her close relatives, which means, approximately, her parents, husband, and children; perhaps one or more sisters as well - go to live in a house reserved for this purpose near the birth house. They stay there as long as the mother and child remain in the birth house. The conventional length of her stay is ten days. All are fām during that period. All return together to their home, and at this time the taboos are lifted from all except the parents.

Work other than caring for the child is tabw to the mother for a considerable period. First stated as two months, this was later defined more strictly as follows: if the moon is visible at sunset, or during the rather short interval thereafter before people go to bed, this tabw lasts for one month; if the moon is not visible at that time, for two months. It was also said that the mother may not leave the homestead for three months. The homestead is here defined to include a bit of shallow water opposite the house site, where the baby is bathed. The father too, is subjected to some restrictions, though they are less rigorous, for the same period as the mother. One taboo--on sexual intercourse lasts until the child can walk. The penalty ascribed to violation of this is the same as

that for sexual intercourse during early pregnancy--the death of the baby."

1: Burrows--197
116, 846

(1947-48)

Woleaians
Ifalik

"As to birth, it can not be said that this crisis is entirely unaccompanied by ritual. The taboos imposed on the parents and closest relatives constitute ritual precautions. The observance takes this negative form rather than the positive one of a definite rite of passage, such as a birth or naming feast or some more distinctively religious act."

2: Damm et al. --189 [12] (1909) 1938 Woleaians
116, 846 Faraulep

When the first child is born, the husband's father gives the father-in-law a large quantity of fish, nuts and bread-fruit.

4: Krämer--108 (1909) 1937 Woleaians
116, 846, 853 Lamotrek

The navel is underbound, gogoi budj. The child is nursed right away and soon is given palm juice, coconut milk, etc.; after about three or four months it is fed fish and taro. Sometimes infants are nursed until they are three years old. The afterbirth, pai, is buried, and the woman goes bathing in the sea. Some resort is taken to exercises, jüjü, in order that the women may become thinner.

4: Krämer--111-112 (1909) 1937 Woleaians-1-2
116, 846 Lamotrek

As on Tobi, we found special birth-huts on Lamotrek; they are called imu or imatamái and are included in the plan of the village. It was mentioned that the im no. 30 is frequently used by the women of the leading families; here they spend a few days of the tenth month before they move into the imatamai for the actual confinement. Here especially women who are giving birth to their first child receive their medicine, the tafei ilólomai, which is generally given to them once a month... Naturally magic, bólebol, is involved in the practice... and for that reason the im no. 30 is also known as im ali bólebol. As long as they stay in the im, the women may not have any visitors; at the most their mother and sisters are allowed to see them and, of course, the servants who pick up the food that the relatives put down on the boundary, róros of the lot. All the fruit trees on the grounds of the house are taboo. Generally the woman stays away from her normal living quarters for one month (Elisabeth Kramer: ten to twenty days). The word for month is aliulang; but there are also little months, aliulang a ket, which last only ten days and constitute the minimum period of absence. There is a difference in the regulation affecting the wives of the chiefs and the ordinary population....

If a child is born when the moon is not visible, that is to say at the time of new moon and up to two days before and after it, the woman in childbed stays in the birth-hut for only 10 days... But if she gives birth when the moon first appears, e.g., on the second or third day after a new moon, then the mother must wait until the 26th day, the

romálefal...and in this case we are dealing with a "long month," aliulang e lap. If, on the other hand, the child is born [112] after the romálefal, the waiting period is a short month. Upon leaving the imatamai the mother is cleansed with a magic bunch of ferns and coconut pinnae, which is known as eafuju lubobo, Figure 63 [VMM: see source])... The separation of husband and wife after birth lasts for three or four months. Divorces are rare. The children stay with the mother.

[ER: A magic song of purification is given in the original text, but is omitted here.]

Poor women, the ordinary people, remain in the im ale gogóbong for four days to "fill the nights" for purification; during that time their name must not be pronounced and not until that period is over do they return to their living quarters. On them lies the sëgë bobo, the taboo of the chiefs. The evening of their departure from the imatamai the wives of the chiefs subject themselves and their servants who have been with them, to the ceremony of the frond of legát; then they go directly to the im. After the birth of the first child the wife of a chief moves as soon as possible into an imalifam (see Oleai), which is located far out on the beach on the weatherside; at night a fire is always kept burning in order that the child may be kept warm and the spirits may be scared off by the flames and smoke which they fear. The husbands do not work in the taro fields during this period of time and all fruit trees are considered taboo; the cutting of toddy is allowed as the one exception. The woman stays away from her house for four months. During the first month she may not go to the waterhole and during the second month she may go out into the taro field but may not do any work. After the fourth month the child is gauák and may be taken away. The cradle of the child is a square frame with net; the type we observed in use is shown in Figure 64; another specimen is in Stuttgart no. 41250 see above photo 7 [VMM: see source].

The woman Ledjelimar of house 10 knew how to practice conjuration of the spirits and the purification of the women after they have left the birth-hut imatamai. Elisabeth

4: Krämer--113 (1909) 1937 Woleaians-2
116, 565, 846 Lamotrek

Krämer noted the following: Generally several women together leave the hut as the moon is waning completely and with their mats and food assemble around the menstrual hut of one of them. Here the female conjuror sits and makes four elulape, magic knots from coconut pinnae out of ferns (see Figure 63 [VMM: see source]) and a bunch of them ealus uru poepoe* which she slowly moved in a circle; [ER: her action is accompanied by special magic words, which are omitted here].

*alus, the spirit, böe, the oracle knot... sometimes knots are made of young coconut pinnae; cf. above saruju lu bobo.

4: Krämer--267 (1909) 1937 Woleaians
116, 846 Woleai

For three months after her confinement, a woman must not have sexual intercourse; from that time on she is free to do as she pleases until she gives birth the next time.

4: Krämer--268 (1909) 1937 Woleaians
116, 846 Woleai

After having given birth, the mother remains in the imalípel for eight days to a month; the hut may be close to her home or at some distance from it. Then she spends ten days in the im ali gogobóng, "enough nights" (from sagon, enough), and five months in the im ali fam, which is probably to be translated as to "give board."

The parents or the closest relatives of the mother take good food to these houses in order that the newborn baby may grow to be healthy and strong. Good care is given to the child. Special cradles are available for them and square frames with cord netting which are covered with a pandanus mat, geagi. (Photo 7). [VMM: see source].

Hellwig: üloid, frame; wa lüloid, net; üloid, rings; taling.

When a woman gives birth to a child, she utters several strange, piercing cries. This is a signal which can be heard by everyone. Each house used for a confinement is newly built especially for that occasion. These im-mellepel are situated at some distance from the dwelling houses, on the beach, and a woman remains there for ten days after the confinement. [188] The members of her family, even the men, visit her constantly, except for those men who are skilled in the art of navigation and who are in charge of deep sea sailing expeditions. Her food during this time is the same as that of the other women.

After the ten days have passed, the hut and all the mats used by the woman during her stay are burned down, and she returns to her home. During the pregnancy and for a long period after the confinement the woman may not have sexual intercourse. I was told that this rule covered a period of several years. There are ways, however, to circumvent this prohibition.

28: Spiro--85 [2] (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians
116, 846, 854 Ifalik

"The baby is then [WPM: after first nursing], for the first time, allowed to rest. It is placed in its 'bed' (giagi), a pandanus mat placed on the floor, over which is placed some cloth, either the cotton cloth introduced by the Japanese, or the native cloth. The baby itself is wrapped in cloth, as a kind of diaper, and is then covered completely with another cloth. This last 'blanket' is used invariably no matter how hot it may be, so as to facilitate perspiration, for if the infant does not perspire freely, its growth will be retarded. Of course, when the baby soils itself, the diaper is replaced with a clean one, the excrements are carried to the ocean, and the soiled diaper is washed.

The infant and mother remain in Emelipen [WPM: see pp. 83-84] for ten days after the birth. During that time her behavior and treatment of the baby are strictly institutionalized. The mother and her attendant (her mother, mother's sister, or husband's mother) take the baby to the channel between the two islands to be washed three times a day--morning, noon, and afternoon. It is not washed in the evening lest an ălusengau make it sick."

28: Spiro--85 [3] (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians
116, 846, 853 Ifalik

"For its first four days the infant is fed water and coconut oil, and whatever milk the mother may have. The infant is fed whenever it cries and when the mother and her attendant think it proper. That is, if the infant should sleep for an extended period, the mother will wake it in order to feed it.

On the fifth day, the mother's milk is usually sufficient, and the breast replaces the coconut oil. But the feeding follows the same pattern--in which first water is given the infant, and then the breast. Again, it is fed whenever it cries, and whenever its mother sees that its stomach is flat or not swollen. If the stomach is swollen, it is assumed that it is not hungry."

28: Spiro--85 [4]
116, 846, 854

(1947-48) 1949

Woleaians
Ifalik

"What must be stressed is the constant attention the infant receives. The mother and her attendant are at the constant service of the baby. One of them is always awake while the other sleeps to ensure that the infant's wants are immediately satisfied.

While the mother and infant are confined to the birth-hut, her family and that of her husband are busy. The men of both families go fishing every day, and their women-folk bring the fish to the mother, since fish will make her milk flow abundantly."

28: Spiro--85 [5] (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians
116, 846 Ifalik

"No male, of course, can go near the birth-hut, neither her husband, son, brother, or stranger. When the mother takes the infant to the channel to wash it, the male relatives may stand on the other side of the channel and thus catch a glimpse of the baby. Any woman, however is allowed free access to the birth-hut. They bring the fish to the mother, as well as the other vegetable foods. However, even they cannot handle the baby, this privilege being restricted to the mother and her attendant. Nor can they remain in Emelipen overnight. They must return to their own homes to sleep."

28: Spiro--86 (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians
116, 846, 352 Ifalik

"The infant's father has one additional responsibility. He must build a cradle (ulol) for the infant. The Ulol has four sides, made of wood, which are fastened together as the bottom with plaited rope, to form the bottom, on which the baby is to lie. Rope is then attached to the four corners, and to the rafters of the roof, so that the cradle is suspended from the rafters, and can be rocked or swung. Eventually, when the baby is brought home, a pandanus mat is placed in the cradle, and the baby is placed on the mat, and then covered with cloth."

"At the end of the ten-day confinement, the baby is brought home, at which time there is a minor celebration. The baby and mother leave for home at dawn, accompanied by the female relatives. The latter also bring food they had previously prepared, and they gather in the house of the mother, where they eat. Men are not allowed in the house at this time, though the taboo is not too severe, because I was permitted to enter. The women merely sit quietly, conversing in subdued tones, offering a suggestion at intervals to the mother, but otherwise remaining inactive and contained, which is very unusual behavior for them. The mother and infant are the centers of attraction, and all eyes are on them.

The mother sits on a pandanus sleep mat, and does not leave the mat, except when she retires to the lagoon for ablutions. The baby lies on a small pandanus mat, which in turn, is placed on a large pandanus mat, which in turn is placed on a large coconut mat. The baby wears cloth swaddling clothes, and when he sleeps he is covered with a very stiff cloth, which acts as a head rest when the mother nurses him, so that his head does not fall back. Covering the cloth is a small pandanus mat, and this is then covered with a blanket, which completely covers the infant. Breathing under these conditions is probably difficult, but, as pointed out above, this facilitates the infant's perspiring, which is deemed so important by the natives.

At the baby's head is the same kind of fire that burns in the birth hut. A small pit is

dug in the house prior to the mother's return, in which is buried the bonito head, and on top of which burns the fire for the duration of the mother's confinement. As already explained, this fire prevents the infant from becoming ill. The fire is sacred in that it may not be used for any secular or profane purpose, except by the mother and her attendant. My attempt to light a cigarette from one of its embers elicited a chorus of sharp etaps. The women remain with the mother till the end of the day, after which they return home, and the mother and child are left to themselves, except for the usual degree of daily visiting.

The father has not as yet entered the house, and it is only after the first day has elapsed that he may do so. However, neither he nor any other person, male or female may touch the baby, or even approach it beyond the mat on which it lies, with the exception of the mother and her attendant. To do so is strictly taboo as I, again, learned from my own behavior. On the fifth day, he is allowed to hold the infant, but he may not yet pick it up by itself, since he cannot approach its mat until the end of the mother's confinement, so that the mother must hand him the infant, if she grants him permission to hold it. If he should take the infant himself, the baby would take sick. At the end of the

mother's three month confinement, she prepares a new mat, the old one is discarded, and the baby can then be directly approached. (6)"

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"6. This avoidance taboo is very interesting in light of the theories of paternal sibling hostility towards the new-born. Both paternal and sibling hatred are shorn of the possibility of over expression by this taboo. One can also interpret the exclusion of the father from the birth-hut in the same manner."

28: Spiro--87 (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians-1-2
116, 846, 784, 854 Ifalik

"Though the father sleeps in the house with his wife, after the second day of her return [WPM: from the birth-hut], parental intercourse is strictly taboo for two rag (approximately one atronomical year). Violation of the taboo will result in the baby's death. Though it is difficult to check on the observance of this taboo directly, there is indirect reason to believe that it is observed. In the first place there are no children whose closest siblings are within an age period that would indicate a conception within the tabooed period. Secondly, at least two fathers left the island after the birth of a child, may well have been motivated by the desire to avoid temptation. And finally, infant mortality is sufficiently high that few would wish to risk the imputation by themselves, as well as by others, of having killed their child by lack of sexual restraint.

The mother and her attendant are confined to their home for three months. They are in constant attendance upon the infant, and may leave the house only for bathing and the performance of their ablutions. But one of them must remain in the house, when the other leaves. The mother is not permitted to do any work that may distract her attention from her baby, so that the only activity permitted her is the making of lavalavas.

Except for this constant attention to the child, which monopolizes her time, there seems to be no indication of differential status or role on the part of the new mother. The only avoidance pattern is the sexual one just described. I discovered only one indication of a slight change of status. While talking with a group of people one evening, I had passed

cigarettes around the group, lit the cigarette of one of the women, and having no more matches, used her cigarette to light the others. Tom refused to take a light, explaining that the woman had just had a baby, and that if he, a captain, should make use of her fire (of any kind), he would drift off his course while on an ocean voyage."

28: Spiro--92 [2] (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians
116, 846, 854 Ifalik

"As pointed out above the mother does not leave her home for the first three months after the birth. At the end of the three month period, she may go about her work, but the infant is not taken with her. It is left in the care of another adult (or adults), and is never left alone, even when it sleeps. It is never left in the care of a child, but may be cared for by an older boy or girl, sibling or non-relative. Though she is permitted to leave her home, the mother does not remain away for a long period, while the infant is still nursing. If she remains away from her baby too long, her nipples feel sore, from which she understands that the baby wants to fed. It should be remembered, moreover, that the mother is never more than twenty minutes from her baby at any point of the island."